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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) for 5 minutes.

PARITY FOR THE POOR

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for too long we have borne witness to relentless attacks on America's poor and working families. We saw those divisions up close in the aftermath of Katrina as the poor and especially the working poor were left behind. Abandoned by corporate America, betrayed by the political right, largely ignored by the mainstream media, our Nation's poor, again especially the working poor, the people that clean hotel rooms, the people who provide security at businesses, the people in this country who are largely not seen and not much thought about, have become little more than an afterthought. While productivity and profit in America are up, wages are falling and poverty is increasing. The average working American over the last 30 years has seen her or his income go up 10 percent, yet their productivity has increased 80 percent. It used to be in our Nation if productivity went up, then wages have gone up, but there is now a disconnect. In other words, workers who create wealth for their employers, workers who create profits for their employers, are simply not sharing in the wealth and the profits that they have created.

An August U.S. census report revealed that in the United States, the number of uninsured Americans increased. Fewer than 60 percent of employers now offer health insurance. Since 2000, the total number of Americans with employer-sponsored coverage has declined by 3.7 million people. Only because of Medicaid, a program that is a government insurance program, has the number of uninsured not dropped even more precipitously. Yet in the face of growing poverty, in the rising number of uninsured Americans, in the disaster that we saw from Katrina, this administration and the leaders of this Congress are demanding that we cut Medicaid by \$10 billion. They want to cut Medicaid by \$10 billion so they can give greater tax cuts to the wealthiest 1 percent of people in this society. Think of that choice. As the poor were left behind and the working poor were left behind in Katrina, this government, the President and the leaders in this House, want to do more tax cuts for the wealthiest 1 percent and they want to cut Medicaid \$10 billion.

Household incomes fell for the fourth year in a row in 2004. The reality is that every segment of American society has seen their income decline except for the wealthy under this administration. Men working full time have seen their earnings drop below what they earned 6 years ago, even though they are more productive, even though profits are up. Women working full time have also seen their annual incomes decrease. The media love to tell us, most of whom are pretty well paid, and politicians in Washington love to tell the public, hey, the economy is going great. It is for a lot of us, but overall wages have declined and poverty has gone up. Profits may be up for corporations and on a large scale the economy may look good, but to most people in this country the economy is not looking so good. America's men and women working full time are the

reason that productivity is up, are the reason that profits are up, but they are simply not sharing in the wealth that they have created.

The number of people living in poverty in America increased over 1 million people in 2004 alone. Eight million children are uninsured. Thirteen million children live in poverty. The infant mortality rate in Washington D.C. is twice as high as the infant mortality rate in Beijing. How shameful is that? The infant mortality rate in this country went up for the first time since 1958. How shameful is that? A U.N. report on global equality sheds light on the shadows of this administration's policies. Parts of the United States are as poor as the Third World. Our Nation cannot survive as a thriving democracy under policies that rely on trickledown economics. Poverty and social breakdown are core components of the global security threat. We cannot really be secure in this country until our people are secure. It is not just about a military. It is also about economic security for the people that clean our hotel rooms, that serve us food, that provide our security, that work at minimum wage jobs.

Economic growth alone is not enough to reduce poverty, as long as we deny our most vulnerable citizens access to health care, access to education, and an opportunity to share in the wealth that they create. These issues represent a divide in government priorities and values that extend far beyond the halls of Congress. These issues represent a moral obligation in a fight for the dignity of every American.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ADERHOLT). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 38 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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